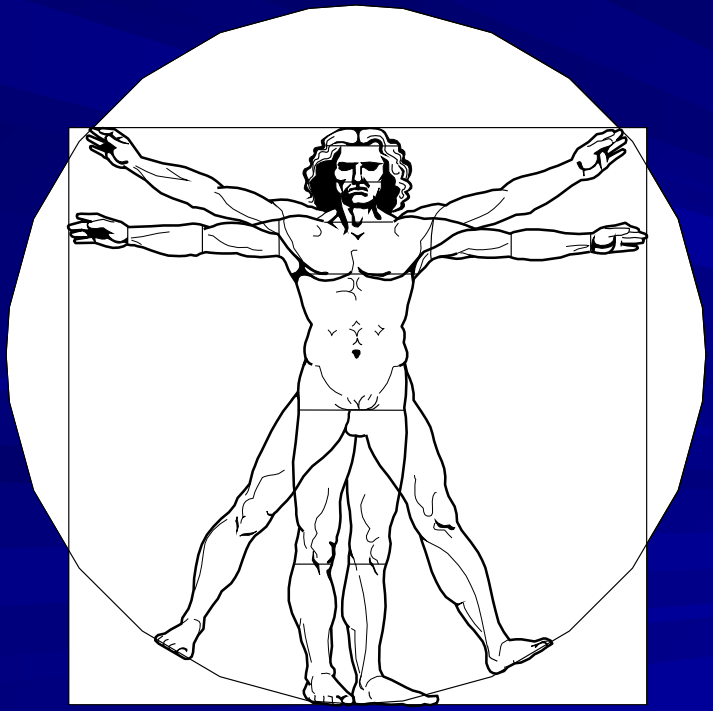
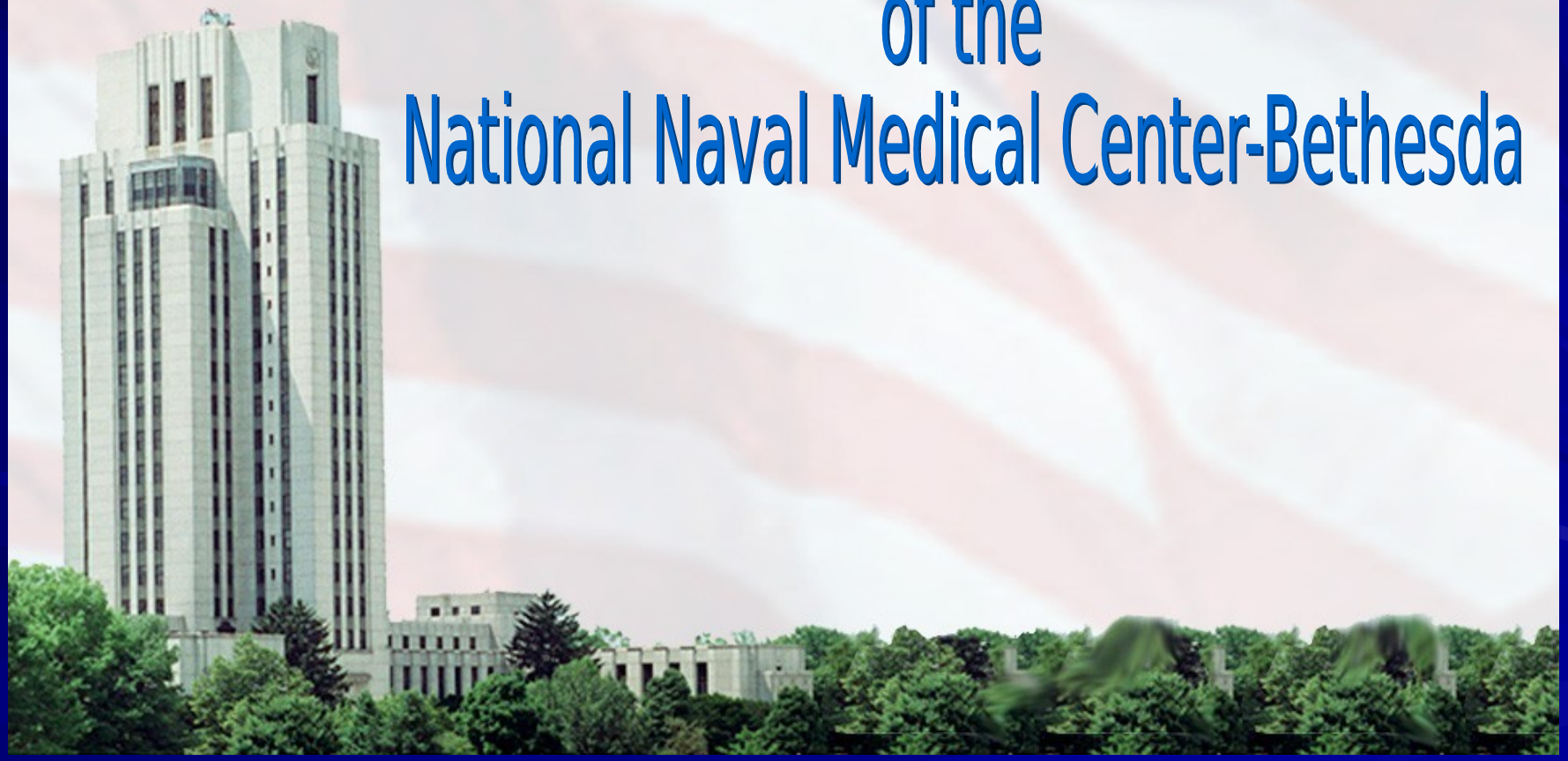
Back Care

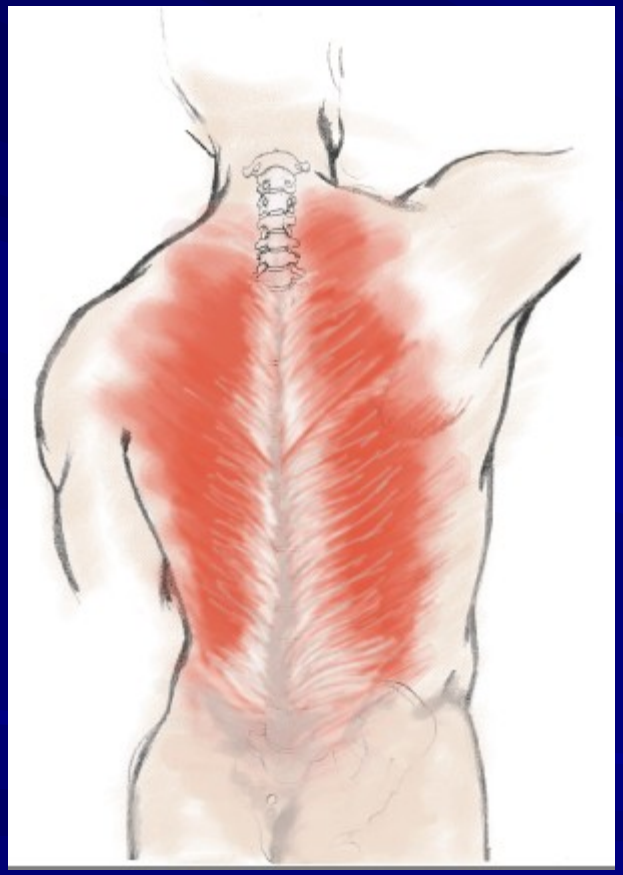


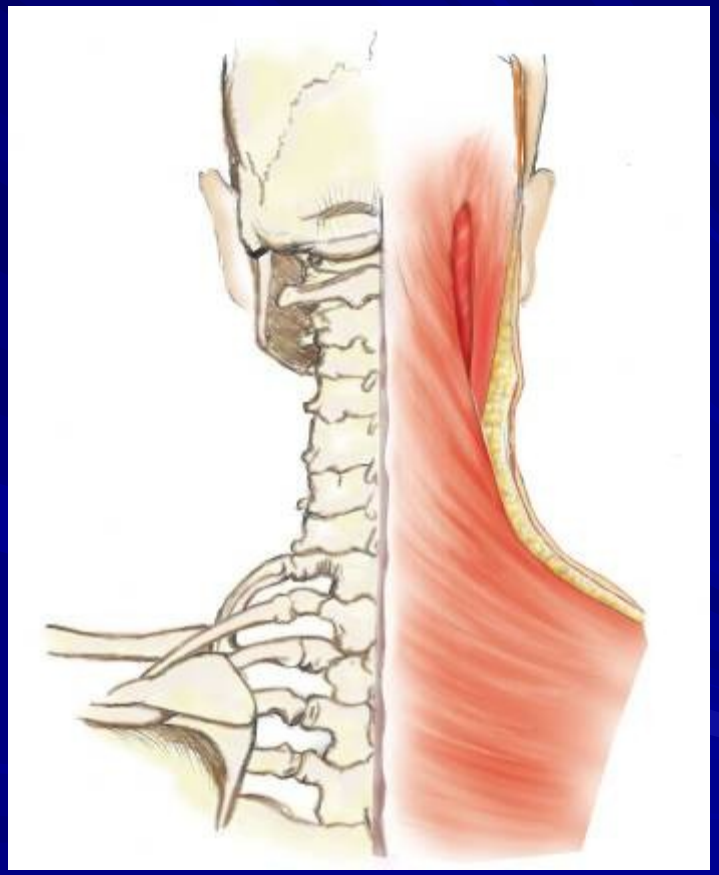
Click to advance.

Presented by the Chiropractic Department of the National Naval Medical Center-Bethesda



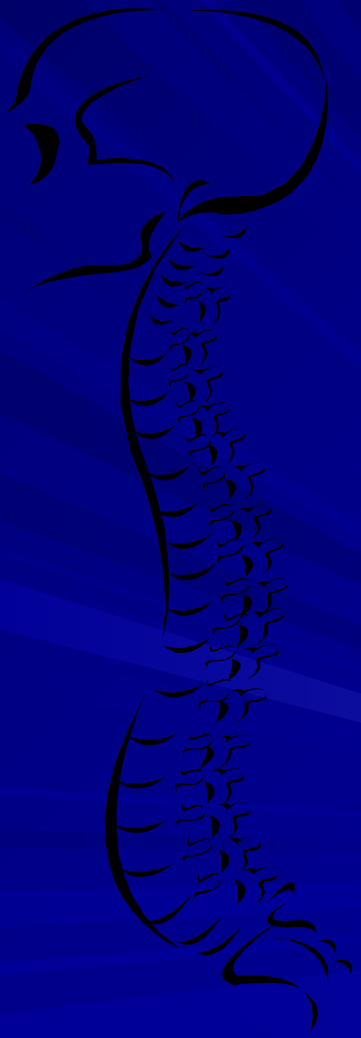
The spine is a marvelously complex structure that is characterized by strength and mobility.



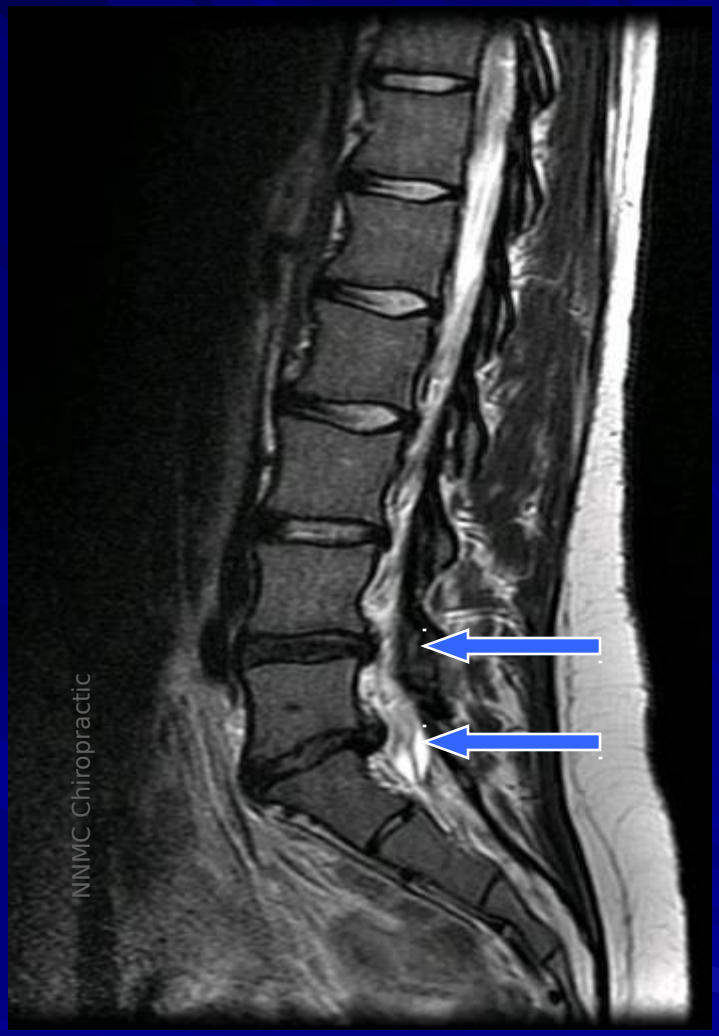


Instructional goals:

- **To teach you how to prevent back injury.**
- **To show you improper postures and behaviors.**
- **To show you exercises to make your back stronger.**

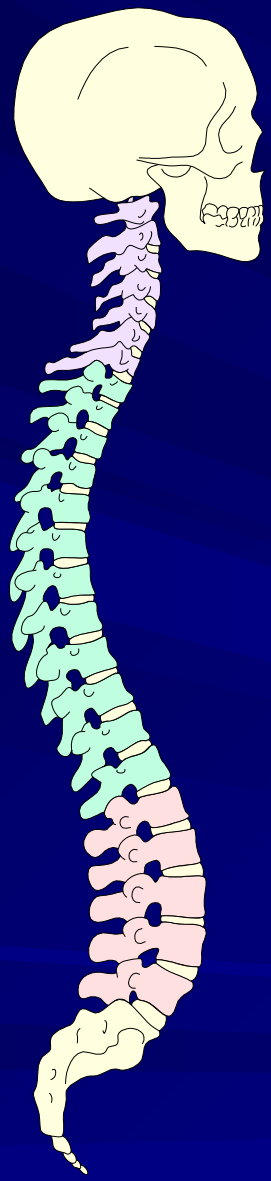


Preventing disease is always preferable to treating disease.



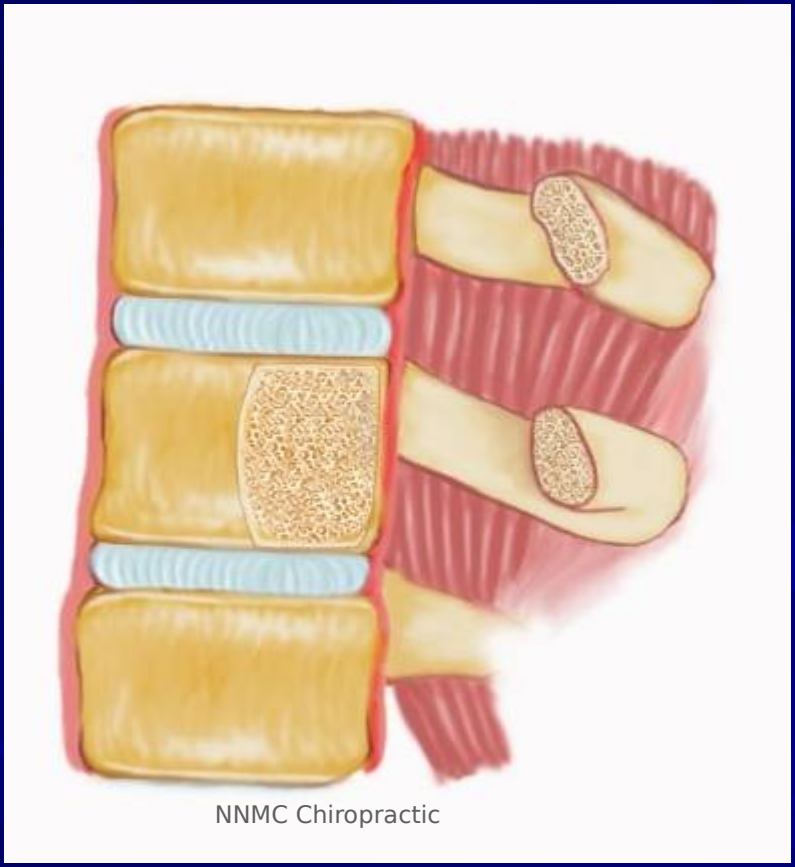
Disc bulges in a 24 year-old woman are seen in this MRI.

Spinal Anatomy



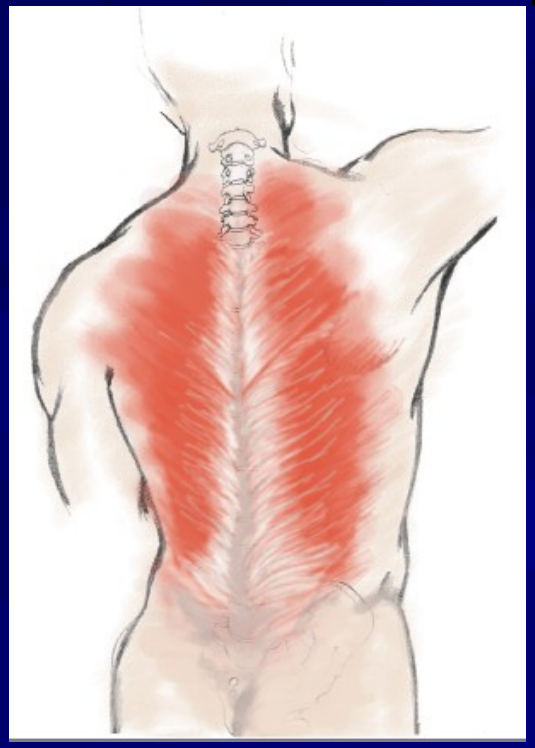
- The spine is composed of 24 freely movable bones called vertebrae.
- These vertebrae protect the spinal cord and provide structure and support.

Spinal Anatomy

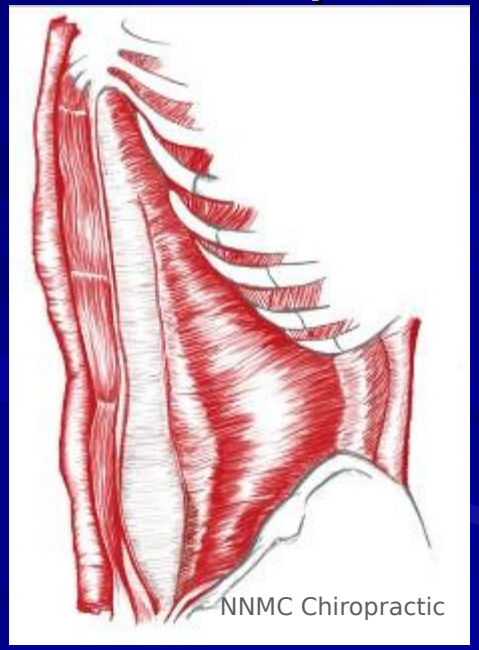


- The bones of the spine (vertebra) are separated by cartilage pads called discs.
- These discs absorb shock and allow movement.

Spinal Anatomy



- A complex network of ligaments and muscles stabilize and move the spine.



Lifting

- Bend with your knees not with your back.
- Lift with your legs.
- Hold the load close to your body.
- Contract your stomach muscles as you lift.
- Keep your back aligned and upright as you lift.
- Avoid twisting while lifting.

Lifting

- Straddle the load to keep it close to your center of gravity.

Lifting

- Never bend at the waist to lift.

Pushing versus Pulling

When possible push your load. Do not pull heavy objects.

Backpacks

- **Backpack straps should be worn on both shoulders.**
- **Excessive weight bearing should be avoided in backpacks.**

Minimize All Overhead Lifting

- **Avoid lifting overhead.**
- **If you must lift overhead, use a sturdy step stool or step ladder to reduce neck and back strain.**

Lifting

- Think <u>before</u> you lift

Use mechanical aids to lift or move heavy items.

Balance Your Burdens

- **Imbalanced loads can strain your neck and back.**
- **Try to balance and lighten your load.**

Standing

- Use a footstool to relieve lower back pain while standing:

  Ironing, shop work, washing the dishes, shaving, lecturing.

Gardening

- **Kneel or squat to garden.**
- **Always avoid bending at the waist.**

Housework

- When sweeping use short strokes with the broom held close to your body.
- Avoid large sweeping motions.
- Do not bend at the waist while sweeping.

Mopping, Raking, Vacuuming…

- When mopping, vacuuming, raking or shoveling make small movements with the implement held close to your body.
- Avoid extending the implement away from your body.

Shaving

- To avoid bending over a sink, a man may shave in the shower.
- Using a footstool will reduce spinal stress when shaving over a sink.

Accessing a Car's Trunk

- Do not bend over the trunk.

Two Ways to Access a Car's Trunk

- Place a foot on the bumper to reduce lower back strain.
- Use the "golfer's tilt" and lift one leg to [illegible] bending into the trunk.

Getting In and Out of a Car

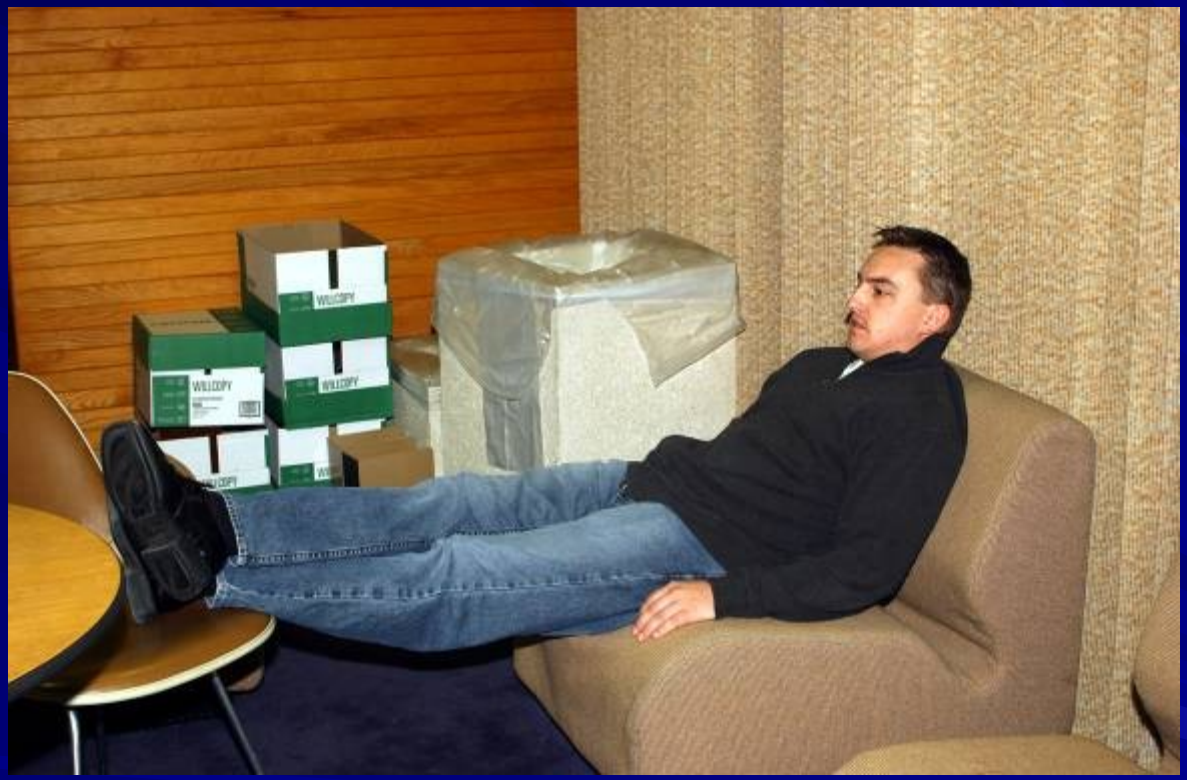
- Do not step into a car.
- Sit on the seat and then pull your legs into the car.
- Reverse the process for getting out.

Adjust Your Work Area to Fit You

- **Have your chair positioned so that your hips are level or below the level of your knees. You may need to use a foot stool to accomplish this.**
- **Use a chair with a comfortable and adjustable back support.**
- **Take frequent breaks to stretch and move about.**

Avoid couches and unsupportive chairs.

Avoid propping your legs up on an ottoman or stool.



Sleeping

- **Sleeping on your side with your head in a neutral or aligned position is a recommended posture.**
- **Body pillows or buttresses may help reduce back and neck pain associated with sleeping.**
- **Do not sleep on your stomach.**

Sleeping

- Sleeping with a cushion under your knees may reduce lower back pain.

Exercises

There is some evidence that specific exercises may benefit low back pain sufferers.

These exercises are for illustrative purposes. Do not perform these or any exercises without the approval of a doctor.

Your Chiropractor may recommend a progression of exercises as you improve from one level of spinal fitness to another.

General Fitness:_

- It is a good idea to aerobically exercise for thirty minutes three times per week.
- People who are aerobically fit are less likely to have lower back pain.

Consult your doctor before beginning any exercise program.

Exercises to Avoid

- Leg lifts
- Flutter kicks
- Bent rowing
- Dead lifting
- Full sit-ups
- Clean and jerk

“Remember that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

Compression Fracture

For an Appointment With Bethesda's Chiropractic Clinic Cal (301) 295-6289